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Working Draft of the Ratio Translationis for the English Language Approved by the Holy See

A working draft of the Ratio Translationis for the English Language was recently sent to Conferences of Bishops where English is spoken and to the International Commission on English in the Liturgy by the Holy See. In his forward to the document, Cardinal Francis Arinze, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments describes the origin and purpose of the text:

1. The Ratio translationis as a genre was established by the 2001 Instruction *Liturgiam authenticam* (n. 9) an instrument to assist the process of translating liturgical texts of the Roman Rite into any given modern language. It represents a new venture whose nature will vary from one language to the next and whose precise form will undoubtedly mature over the years. This is an illustrative document, designed to spell out the practical implications of current requirements. The availability of a basic guide in the English language will be of undoubted help to the Bishops and to those experts they call to assist them in such a pastorally crucial, technically difficult and time-consuming task.

2. The present text is the fruit of extensive examination and discussion of the Instruction *Liturgiam authenticam*. This reflection took place in the first place under the auspices of the *Vox Clara* Committee, a group of senior Bishops from different parts of the English-speaking world who are assisted by a range of experts. The Committee was appointed by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments in July 2002 to assist it in finding ways of ensuring a rapid and sure-handed implementation of the Instruction in the English-speaking world.

3. Having received a relatively mature draft from the Committee, the Congregation then undertook a consultation of English-speaking Bishops' Conferences in search of suggestions for possible improvement. The suggestions received, though not always easy to reconcile, have been in so far as possible incorporated into the text as published here. The process of development of the Ratio translationis text has benefited formally and informally from the counsels and the work of the International Commission for English in the Liturgy (ICEL) following its

re-establishment by the Congregation and approval of new Statutes on 15 September 2003.

4. The Congregation has accepted the Vox Clara Committee's recommendation that the project continue with the compilation and eventual publication of a certain number of appendices to explicitate some further applications of principle. There is, however, general agreement of those concerned, including ICEL, that it would be helpful to publish without further delay the main body of the text as it now stands. Clearly, the examples of translation given are not intended to be definitive, but simply to illustrate the points being made in the Ratio.

5. The Congregation is most grateful to all who have worked hard to develop this Working Draft of the Ratio translationis and would be happy to receive suggestions for further improvement to it that emerge during the work of applying the requirements of Liturgiam authenticam to a new generation of English-language translations. Such suggestions should reach the Congregation before August 2006, in view of the compiling of a definitive text.

The Ratio consists of three Parts: Presuppositions, Principles, and Application of Principles.

The "Presuppositions for the Authentic Translation of Liturgical Texts in the Roman Rite" address such questions as the meaning of liturgical language, the principal characteristics of the language of the Roman Rite, and elements of the rite's patristic origins. The organic development of the Roman Rite is also explored with a view to the gradual development of a "liturgical vernacular."

The "Principles of Translation for the Liturgy of the Roman Rite" are divided into sections dealing with: the "Identity and Unitary Expression of the Roman Rite," "Adaptation to the Qualities and Exigencies of the Vernacular Language," and "the Oral-Aural-Mnemonic Dimensions of Translation."

Finally, the "Application of the Principles of Translation to the English Language" addresses questions of syntax, genre, style, person, number and gender.

Consultors to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments

On March 12, 2005, shortly before his death, Pope John Paul II appointed Reverend Jeremy Driscoll, O.S.B. as a Consultor to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments for a five-year term. Father Driscoll has been a monk of Mount Angel Abbey since 1983, and holds a doctorate in patristics from San Anselmo in Rome. He currently teaches one semester each year at Mount Angel Seminary and another at San Anselmo in Rome.

On the same date, the late Holy Father reappointed Monsignor James P. Moroney, Executive Director of the USCCB Secretariat for the Liturgy, to a second five-year term as a consultor to the Congregation. Monsignor Moroney was first appointed to this post on March 10, 1999. Both Monsignor Moroney and Father Driscoll serve as advisors to the Vox Clara Committee.

Five Americans have been appointed by the Holy Father as consultors to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments since the Second Vatican Council. Four of them have also served as Executive Director of the USCCB Secretariat for the Liturgy: Monsignor Frederick McManus (1965-1975), Reverend John Rotelle, OSA (191975-1978), and Reverend Thomas Krosnicki, SVD (1978-1981). Father Krosnicki currently serves as an advisor to the Committee on the Liturgy.

Three Americans serve as members of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments: Cardinal Francis George, Cardinal Bernard Law, and Cardinal Justin Rigali.

So I have been assigned months of misery,
and troubled nights have been allotted to me...

The sense line format greatly assisted lectors by breaking the text into shorter segments and suggesting logical breaks in sometimes long sentences. Experience with the Pueblo Lectionary for Mass, as well as with several similar lectionaries in other countries, led the Holy See to recommend the practice in its 1981 publication of the *Ordo Lectionum Missae*, editio altera. The revised *Ordo* included a significantly expanded *praenotanda*. The layout of scriptural readings is addressed in number 115 of that *praenotanda*:

“Whenever a text consists of different parts, the typography must make this structure of the text clear. It is likewise recommended that even non-poetic texts be printed with division into sense lines to assist the proclamation of the readings.”

An article in the March 1991 BCL Newsletter, entitled *Lectionaries Approved for Liturgical Use*, reflected the intention of the Committee to implement the directive of the 1981 *Ordo Lectionum Missae*, no. 115.

...before any translation of Scripture can be published in the form of a lectionary it would be edited for liturgical use. A proper incipit (beginning) must be prepared for each reading (OLM 124). Pronouns will at times need to be replaced by nouns to which they refer for the sake of clarity or facility in public reading. Without altering the meaning of the biblical text, some changes may need to be made for the sake of more inclusive language, and the readings will be arranged in sense-lines to assist proper proclamation (Thirty Five Years of the BCL Newsletter, USCCB Publications, Washington, DC 2004, p. 1244).

Thus, in 1993, the *Lectionary for Masses with Children* for use in the dioceses of the United States of America was published with the readings in sense lines, and in 1995, the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions approved the following position statement, entitled 1995 E:

It is the position of the delegates to the 1995 National Meeting of the Diocesan Liturgical Commissions that the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions’ Board of Directors request the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy to require that Lectionaries published in the United States follow the layout presented by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy especially in the following areas: location of page breaks at a natural point in the text, locations of options in a place that will facilitate their use, and similar aspects of layout and design, and to test these texts with priests, deacons, and other leaders in prayer to ensure the ease of future publications and new editions of current texts. (Thirty Five Years of the BCL Newsletter, USCCB Publications, Washington, DC 2004, p. 1467).

In the February-March, 1993 BCL Newsletter, an article entitled *The New Lectionary For Mass: A Reader’s Perspective* addressed the use of sense lines in responding to the question “Why are the readings laid out differently?”

All readings in the revised Lectionary have been presented in sense lines with indentations. Experts in the art of proclamation were consulted in order to present the text in a way that would encourage effective and easy proclamation by readers of the word of God. (Thirty Five Years of the BCL Newsletter, USCCB Publications, Washington, DC 2004, p. 1583).

On June 17, 1997, the Committee on the Liturgy approved Editorial Requirement for granting the *Concordat cum originali*. Number 2 notes: “Sense lines, as exemplified by the typical edition, must be observed in all cases.”

Finally, in the *Guidelines for the Publication of Participation Aids*, approved by the BCL in June of 1998, the Committee on the Liturgy agreed that: “The arrangement of readings in the typical sense lines provided in the Lectionary for Mass is optional. When the sense lines of the Lectionary are not observed, the sense lines of the New American Bible must be followed.”